

# Principled Policing

Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias

## Training



A Stanford SPARQ and  
California Department of Justice  
White Paper on the Principled  
Policing Training Evaluation



SPARQ

# Principled Policing

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## Training to Build Police-Community Relations

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### Executive Summary

The relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve must be grounded in trust in order to ensure safety and protection for all. Recent events in California and across the nation have strained this relationship. As part of Attorney General Kamala D. Harris' ongoing commitment to identify strategies to strengthen trust between law enforcement and communities, the Department of Justice offered California law enforcement executives a course entitled Principled Policing in November 2015. Principled Policing was the first Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST)-certified course on procedural justice and implicit bias in the nation. Over 50 law enforcement executives from 28 departments across California participated in one-day trainings held in Sacramento and Los Angeles. The Department developed the training in partnership with Stanford SPARQ, the Oakland and Stockton Police Departments, and the community organization California Partnership for Safer Communities.

Stanford SPARQ evaluated the course. Key points from that evaluation are summarized below:

- Police executives found the training effective in advancing their knowledge of procedural justice and implicit bias.
- Police executives believed the training could help increase trust and decrease tension between police and community.
- The training increased confidence among police executives that better police-community relations are possible.
- The training helped police executives recognize multiple routes to positive change, including the role of diverse stakeholders.
- The training was well-received by agencies of varying size and geographic location.

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# Introduction

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Every day thousands of men and women protect and serve communities across California, sometimes under very difficult circumstances. The vast majority of peace officers in California are committed to promoting the safety and wellbeing of their communities and continually perform at commendable levels of sacrifice and service. Sadly, recent events in California and across the nation have highlighted the ongoing challenges to developing and fostering strong relationships of trust between law enforcement and communities.

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris, in her second inaugural address in January 2015, highlighted the importance of trust between law enforcement and the communities they are sworn to serve and recognized the fracturing of this trust across the nation. As a first step, she directed the California Department of Justice's Division of Law Enforcement to conduct a 90-day review of its Special Agent training programs on implicit bias and use of force. The Attorney General also convened the 21st Century Policing Working Group – a coalition of law enforcement leaders committed to ensuring that California leads the national conversation on developing solutions, increasing mutual understanding, and strengthening trust between law enforcement and communities.

A key initiative of the 21st Century Policing Working Group was to incorporate evidence-based strategies for building trust into police officer training. For many years, the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) has offered trainings aimed at equipping peace officers with the tools and strategies to successfully and effectively engage with members of the public. Emerging research now offers new, evidence-based approaches to building trust between law enforcement and communities.

Thus, in partnership with Stanford SPARQ, the California Partnership for Safe Communities, and the Stockton and Oakland Police Departments, in November 2015 the Department of Justice offered the first POST-certified Implicit Bias and Procedural Justice training in the United States. Over 50 law enforcement leaders from across California participated in a one-day training held in Sacramento and Los Angeles. Following completion of the course, researchers from Stanford SPARQ conducted an evaluation with participants to assess the effectiveness of the course in educating police leaders about procedural justice and implicit bias as well as shifts in their perceptions of police-community relations.

This white paper presents the key findings from the course evaluation and illustrates the tremendous potential of Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias training as one strategy to improve the relationship of trust between law enforcement and the communities they are sworn to serve.

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# About the Principled Policing Course

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## *A Diverse Team of Instructors Demonstrates How to Increase Police-Community Trust*

The one-day training was taught by a diverse team including police leaders (Chief Eric Jones, Stockton; Asst. Chief Paul Figueroa, Oakland; Cpt. Le Ronne Armstrong, Oakland; Sgt. Gary Benevides, Stockton), a community leader (Ben McBride, Empower Initiative, Oakland), a university professor (Jennifer Eberhardt, Stanford University), and the General Counsel of the Department of Justice (Suzy Loftus, Office of the Attorney General).

The objective of the course, entitled Principled Policing, was to unpack the concept of procedural justice and how it strengthens the relationship of trust between police and communities, and to present the concept of implicit bias. The most important aspects of procedural justice are giving people the opportunity to tell their side of the story, remaining neutral in decision-making and behavior, treating people with respect, and explaining actions in a way that communicates caring for people's concerns so as to demonstrate trustworthiness. One significant threat to procedural justice is implicit bias—thoughts and feelings about social groups that can influence perceptions, decisions, and actions. Implicit bias can influence people without their awareness and despite their desire to be fair and impartial. Although implicit bias is pervasive, people are more likely to act on bias in some situations than in others, and law enforcement leaders have some control over the situations to which their officers are exposed.

The training described how law enforcement leaders could expose their officers to situations that could help protect them from bias and lead them to behave in ways that are more procedurally just. Underlying the course is the idea that an understanding of procedural justice, as well as the factors that act as barriers to it, can enhance police leaders' capacity to make positive changes.

The training, divided into six modules, included research findings, video clips illustrating key points, brief and compelling PowerPoint presentations, personal experiences recounted by officers and community members, group exercises, and an opportunity for frank and honest communication among participants. The training was a unique mix of: attention to the concepts of procedural justice and implicit bias and how they operate, the goals and motivations of police officers, the sources of stress and cynicism in policing, the historical and generational effects of policing, and finally, strategies for simultaneously enhancing police-community trust and improving the health and safety of police officers.

### **What are the key tenets of procedural justice?**

- Voice
- Respect
- Neutrality
- Trustworthiness



## What is implicit bias?

Thoughts and feelings about social groups that can influence people's perceptions, decisions and actions without awareness.

An invitation to participate in the course was sent to law enforcement leaders in agencies throughout California. Fifty-five leaders participated in the training, one held in Los Angeles and one in Sacramento. Approximately one-to-two weeks before each training, participants completed a brief (10 minute) survey. Following the training, they completed a second survey.

## The Training Was Well-Received and Effective

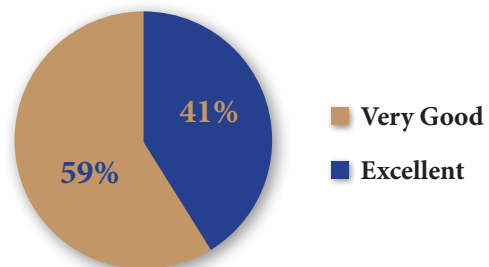
Participants gave the course high-marks. Every law enforcement executive rated the training as either "very good" (41%) or "excellent" (59%).

The training modules were useful. There was a strong consensus that the training would be useful to them in their role at their own agency; on a scale from one to ten, the leaders gave the training an average usefulness rating of 9.28.

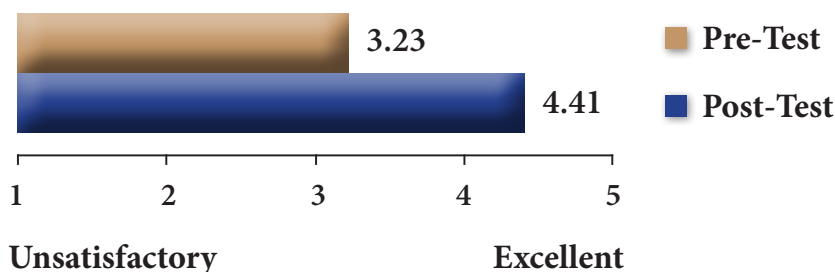
Law enforcement leaders advanced their knowledge. Apart from finding the course enjoyable and useful, law enforcement leaders believed it increased their knowledge of both procedural justice and implicit bias.

Between the pre-training survey and the post-training survey, participants reported a 37% increase in their understanding of procedural justice and a 30% increase in their knowledge of implicit bias.

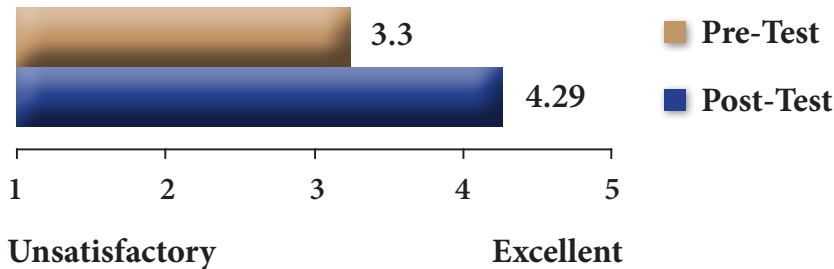
### No rating lower than "Very Good"



*How would you rate your current understanding of procedural justice?*



How would you rate your current understanding of implicit bias?



“A statewide standard for this training should be established” -Course participant

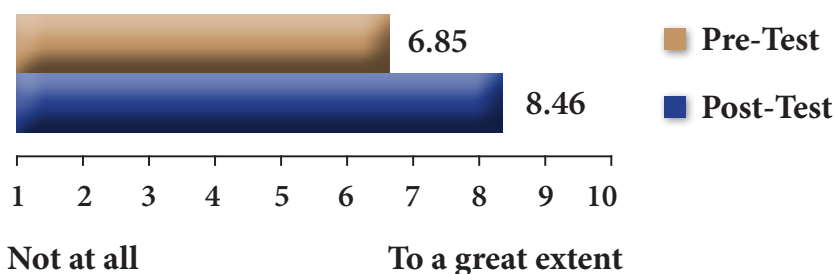
## Decreased Tension, Increased Trust

“Now is the time to return to a few grassroots principles of communicating with the community, and earning their trust, respect, confidence, and then their support. We have to constantly strive to build and maintain relationships. When we take each other for granted, failure is inevitable.” -Course participant

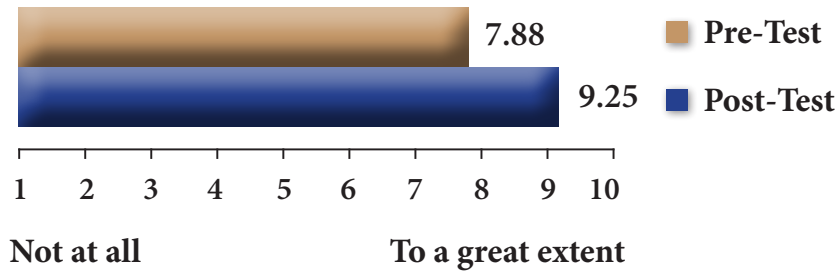
**The course increased sympathy toward the community.** Following the training, law enforcement leaders became more conscious of issues facing the community and reported a **17% increase in their sympathy toward community concerns**. The training also heightened their concern about existing tensions between the police and the community.

**Trainings can improve community relations.** The training convinced leaders that such courses could play a role in improving police-community relations. In particular, they believed that the course could help decrease tension and increase trust between the police and the community.

“To what extent do you think this course could play a role in decreasing police-community tension?”



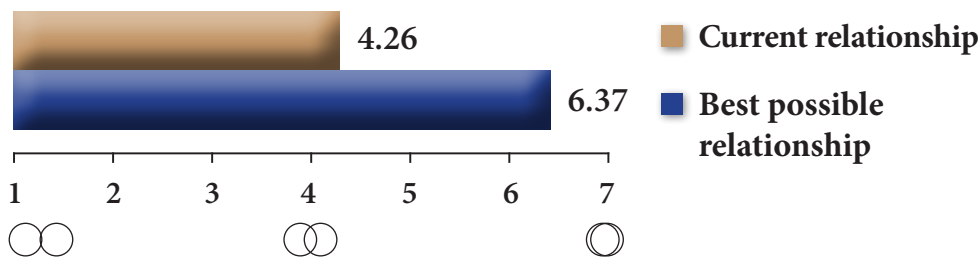
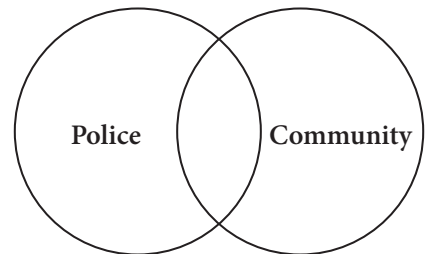
*“To what extent do you think this course could play a role in increasing police-community trust?”*



## An Opportunity for Change

**Police leaders want a better relationship with the community.**

Police leaders evaluated the closeness of their relationship with the community in two ways: their current relationship and their best possible relationship. The gap between the current and ideal state of police-community relations was significant: Police leaders desired a relationship that was a full 50% closer than their existing relationship.



Police leaders believe they can make a difference. The training left law enforcement leaders feeling more motivated and

empowered to improve relations with the community. Following the training, leaders' confidence that change was possible increased by 10%. Furthermore, they felt that they themselves could personally make a difference in helping improve police-community relations.

**Multiple agents of change.** Before the training, leaders evaluated how effective a wide array of factors could be in improving trust between the police and the community—for example, local and federal government, the media, activists, police training and police outreach to the community. After the training, leaders became even more confident in the potential of many of these factors—even the role of community activists—to make a difference in improving trust.

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## Openness to Solutions

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The training not only helped leaders to recognize that there were many possible actors who could work to produce positive change, the training also helped them recognize that there were many possible routes to positive change. The following solutions received the highest ratings:

- Encouraging officers to treat other people as they would like to be treated
- Reminding officers of the values and ideals that led them to enter the policing profession
- Reminding officers that what they do today will have an impact on future generations

The executives also voiced strong support for a number of other tactics, such as encouraging more advanced skills training and teaching officers that change is possible.



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## Success Across Regions

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The training was delivered in both Northern and Southern California, and was successful in both regions. Additionally, the course presented information in a way that was useful and relevant for agencies of varying size and location.

The following agencies participated in the Principled Policing course:

- Berkeley Police Department
- California Department of Justice
- California Highway Patrol
- El Cerrito Police Department
- Elk Grove Police Department
- Fremont Police Department
- Fresno Police Department
- Indio Police Department
- Lassen County Sheriff's Department
- Long Beach Police Department
- Los Angeles Airport Police Department
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Modesto Police Department
- Newport Beach Police Department
- Orange County Sheriff's Department
- Oxnard Police Department
- Rancho Cordova Police Department
- Richmond Police Department
- Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
- Sacramento Police Department
- San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
- San Diego County District Attorney's Office
- San Diego Police Department
- San Francisco Police Department
- San Jose Police Department
- Simi Valley Police Department
- Ventura Police Department

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

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A POST-certified, evidence-based Implicit Bias and Procedural Justice training produced significant increases in knowledge about procedural justice and implicit bias, in the belief that it is possible to reduce tension between the police and the community, in sympathy for communities, and in desire for better police-community relations. The training also increased law enforcement leaders' confidence that they themselves could make a positive change in police-community relations, and their belief that implicit bias and procedural justice training is an important factor in strengthening these relations.

**Some key factors in producing an effective Implicit Bias and Procedural Justice training include:**

- A strong, on-going partnership among police leaders, community leaders, university researchers, and government agencies.
- Engaged and enthusiastic instructors, course materials and exercises grounded in the reality of everyday policing and tied to community-specific histories and experiences, and the presentation of relevant research conducted with police officers.
- Immediate evaluation of the training, as well as subsequent evaluations and changes to future trainings based on these evaluations.

**The following are recommendations to expand on the success of the Principled Policing course:**

- Offer a POST-certified, evidence-based training on Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias to law enforcement agencies statewide.
- Train small cohorts from law enforcement agencies and equip them with the knowledge and skills to teach the concepts of procedural justice and implicit bias to colleagues in their departments.
- Develop follow-up trainings to help police leaders shift their culture so they can put their knowledge of procedural justice and implicit bias into action and leverage their confidence that positive change in police-community relations is possible.

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## For More Information

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